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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: GRUEVSKI READY TO RECOGNIZE KOSOVO IN OCTOBER,
PESSIMISTIC ON NAME TALKS

CLASSIFIED BY: CDA Tom Navratil for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Macedonia wants to recognize Kosovo along with Montenegro and possibly Portugal, but this will likely not happen until mid-October, PM Gruevski told the Charge Sept. 21. Gruevski said he is coordinating closely with Montenegrin PM Djukanovic, and is delaying at his request. Gruevski asserted that this plan would head off a harsher reaction from Belgrade. He reiterated that there is no question that Macedonia will recognize, and will do so by this deadline even if the other countries back out. Gruevski remained downbeat on any chance for a breakthrough on name negotiations with Greece. He also provided his thinking on the Chief Prosecutor's decision to prosecute four cases recently returned to Macedonia by the ICTY, all of which implicate Albanians (reported septel). End summary.

2. (C) PM Gruevski and FonMin Milososki called in Charge Sept. 21 to inform us that he has decided to wait until approximately mid-October to recognize Kosovo in the expectation that by that time Montenegro and perhaps Portugal will be ready to do so simultaneously. (FonMin Milososki reported that he had met his Portuguese counterpart on Sept. 19, and that he understood Portugal was also seriously considering recognizing in the first half of October.) The PM said he believes Belgrade would react far more harshly to Macedonian recognition before UNGA, especially if Skopje were to do so alone. He reported that the Serbian PM's Chief of Staff recently visited Skopje and warned of dire consequences --including ending Serbia's recognition of Macedonia under its constitutional name -- should Macedonia recognize before UNGA. Gruevski said he has directly consulted Montenegrin PM Djukanovic, who told him that he will convene a debate on European integration in the Montenegrin parliament starting on Oct. 5 and will use the opportunity to prepare his public for Kosovo recognition, then make the move in the Oct. 10-15 time frame. Gruevski stressed that there was no question that Macedonia will recognize Kosovo, reiterating that he understood how important this was for the U.S. and the region.

3. (C) Charge responded that Washington will be disappointed that Macedonia did not recognize Kosovo before the UNGA, as we had been led to expect, and pressed Gruevski to agree that the date would not slip even further. Gruevski responded strongly that even if Djukanovic gets cold feet, Macedonia will recognize by mid-October even if it must do so alone. Furthermore, should Montenegro decide to recognize sooner, so will Macedonia. Milososki assessed that Serbia's proposal before the UNGA to take Kosovo's independence to the ICJ will pass, thus lowering the level of concern regarding more recognitions in Belgrade. He argued that the Serbian leadership will be able to tell its people that Kosovo's independence is now a legal, not a political issue, even if more countries recognize. Therefore, he continued, Serbia will have a more measured reaction at that time

than it would now, especially because Serbia would respond especially harshly to Macedonia in order to warn Montenegro. Gruevski added that he is concerned not only about trade being cut off but also that Belgrade may "unrecognize" Macedonia under its constitutional name. Finally, Gruevski urged that we not discuss his plans widely; he has not been happy with rampant speculation of imminent Kosovo recognition in the domestic press. (Note: Sept. 22 media reported an expected delay in recognition, citing GoM sources.)

14. (C) Milososki reported that he had a relatively unproductive meeting with Greek FonMin Bakoyannis on Sept 19, though it was helpful that both sides are demonstrating a public willingness to keep working on the issue. Milososki said Bakoyannis was unwilling to shift Greece's negotiating position in any way, and that she said Athens was prepared to wait "for years" if necessary for Skopje to accept it. Nonetheless, he anticipated that he and Bakoyannis would meet again during the UNGA, perhaps along with President Crvenkovski. Neither he nor Gruevski were optimistic that the issue would be settled soon, even with what they characterized as a positive proposal from UN negotiator Nimetz on the table.

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